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**From:** McBay, Stephen [Mcbay.Stephen@epa.gov]  
**Sent:** 12/8/2021 4:58:56 PM  
**To:** McBay, Stephen [Mcbay.Stephen@epa.gov]  
**Subject:** Daily News Clips: 12/8/2021  
**Attachments:** Daily News Clips 12-8-2021.docx; EPA Daily News Clips for Wednesday, December 8, 2021

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[AP: Con Ed proposes network to bring offshore wind power onshore; December 8, 2021 by Wayne Parry](#)

Con Edison, the New York utility company, is planning to build an electric transmission facility off the coast of New Jersey to connect multiple offshore wind projects and bring the power ashore.

[Environmental Health News: The hidden culprit stealing people's breath in Puerto Rico; December 8, 2021 by Lorraine N. Velez-Torres](#)

As a Puerto Rican, I know that many of our communities are still suffering from the devastation caused by Hurricane María on September 20, 2017.

[Insider NJ: Rep. Sherrill Holds Science, Space, and Technology Committee Hearing on PFAS Research and Development; December 7, 2021 by Staff](#)

In Her Role As Environment Subcommittee Chair, Rep. Sherrill Heard from Experts in Hearing Entitled "Forever Chemicals: Research and Development for Addressing the PFAS Problem"

[Newsday: More than \\$2.5M in grants to improve water quality in Long Island Sound; December 8, 2021 by Vera Chinese](#)

One of Long Island's largest grants for the Long Island Sound is \$249,046 for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County to restore degraded shoreline marshes in Centerport Harbor using cordgrass, shown, and ribbed mussels.

[NYT: The Achilles' Heel of Biden's Climate Plan? Coal Miners.; December 8, 2021 by Noam Scheiber](#)

For years, environmentalists have sought compromises with labor unions in industries reliant on fossil fuels, aware that one of the biggest obstacles to cutting carbon emissions is opposition from the unions' members.

[Reuters: U.S. EPA proposes biofuel mandate cuts, a boost to pandemic-hit refiners; December 7, 2021 by Stephanie Kelly and Jarrett Renshaw](#)

The Biden administration on Tuesday proposed scaling back the amount of biofuels that U.S. oil refiners were required to blend into their fuel mix since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Spectrum News 1: DEC commissioner: Work on new Hoosick Falls water source to take place 'in a few months'; December 7, 2021 by Susan Arbetter](#)

Last week, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) [released its final plan](#) for a permanent replacement water source for the community of Hoosick Falls.

NATIONAL

**\*See attached email**

AP

<https://apnews.com/article/technology-business-new-jersey-environment-wind-power-4fe3f6c01895eedcec5c1a9f0ed1d13d>

## **Con Ed proposes network to bring offshore wind power onshore**

December 8, 2021

Wayne Parry

Con Edison, the New York utility company, is planning to build an electric transmission facility off the coast of New Jersey to connect multiple offshore wind projects and bring the power ashore.

The company on Monday proposed “Clean Link New Jersey,” a transmission network into which numerous turbine-powered wind farms can plug. It would carry the electricity along New Jersey’s coast, coming ashore at two power substations in locations yet to be determined in central or northern New Jersey.

Con Edison Transmission Inc. plans to connect 2.4 gigawatts of future offshore wind capacity to the grid’s high-voltage onshore system, which it said is enough to power about 1 million homes. The project would install multiple underwater transmission cables through a defined “power corridor,” to minimize the environmental impact.

The offshore network would allow offshore wind projects to plug in as they become ready to generate power.

“Clean Link New Jersey will advance the Garden State’s clean energy future, providing reliable energy delivery of offshore wind generation,” said Stuart Nachmias, president and CEO of Con Edison Transmission. “Our proposed project will provide good-paying jobs and economic opportunity, preserve the beauty of the Jersey shoreline, and minimize disruption to New Jerseyans while helping achieve the state’s clean energy goals.”

Doug O’Malley, director of Environment New Jersey, said projects like this get comparatively little attention, but are just as crucial as turbines to the success of offshore wind.

“Offshore wind turbines only work if there’s a way to connect their clean energy to the onshore electric grid,” he said. “Offshore wind interconnection is as critical as the construction of turbines off the Jersey Shore, and it’s paramount that New Jersey looks to review projects that maximize transmission of clean energy and minimize environmental impacts.”

The project comes as New Jersey moves rapidly to establish itself as the East Coast leader in offshore wind energy.

Thus far, New Jersey’s Board of Public Utilities has approved three offshore wind energy projects: two by Danish wind developer Orsted, and one by Atlantic Shores, a joint venture between EDF Renewables North America and Shell New Energies US.

Those three projects combined aim to provide enough electricity to power over 1.6 million homes. New Jersey has set a goal of generating 100% of its energy from clean sources by 2050, and plans to solicit additional wind energy projects every two years until at least 2028.

Atlantic Shores is also planning a second New Jersey project that it has not publicly announced, but that is referenced in documents filed with the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

Con Edison's proposal is not the first project envisioned to bring offshore wind onto land in New Jersey. A Massachusetts company plans to build a high-voltage line to bring electricity from a future New Jersey offshore wind farm onto land, and connect it to the power grid. Anbaric, of Wakefield, Massachusetts, has already obtained several permits from New Jersey environmental regulators for what it calls its Boardwalk Power Link project.

Con Edison submitted the project in September to PJM, the regional transmission organization that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity in 13 states and Washington, D.C. The application will be evaluated by PJM and the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities.

Con Edison primarily serves New York City and Westchester County, but it does have some operations in northern New Jersey through a subsidiary, Orange and Rockland Utilities.

## The hidden culprit stealing people's breath in Puerto Rico

December 8, 2021

Lorraine N. Velez-Torres

As a Puerto Rican, I know that many of our communities are still suffering from the devastation caused by Hurricane María on September 20, 2017.

Post-storm headlines highlighted increased [mold](#) and [asthma spikes](#). But difficulties breathing in Puerto Rico are not new: the island can literally take your breath away.

Puerto Ricans are disproportionately affected with asthma: Adult asthma rates are 1.3 times higher than in the U.S., and Puerto Rican children are twice as likely to be afflicted as compared to U.S. children. Asthma, a complex disease influenced by both genetic and environmental factors, not only impacts individuals' daily routines but also costs the U.S. economy more than [\\$80 billion per year](#) due to medical expenses, missed work or school, loss of productivity, and transportation expenses.

*[This essay is part of "Agents of Change" — see the full series](#)*

This asthma burden is especially challenging in Puerto Rico, where the poverty rate surpasses 40%—large-scale studies addressing asthma causes can cost millions of dollars. And the country remains a target for tropical storms that allow fungal growth and respiratory diseases to flourish. This is worsened by the lack of planning, supplies, and disaster funds in inadequate post-disaster U.S. government responses.

So why are asthma rates so much higher in Puerto Rico? One of the hidden culprits is fungal spores.

### Fungal spores ignored

Fungal spores are to fungi what seeds are to plants—they allow for reproduction. They also have a sizable impact on lung health. Since fungal spores are microscopic and airborne, they can get into the upper and lower respiratory tracts, triggering allergy and asthma symptoms. A recent [study](#) found that increases in fungal spore concentrations were associated with higher outpatient, hospital, and emergency department insurance claims in Puerto Rico. Due to its tropical location in the Caribbean, high humidity levels, and frequent flooding, Puerto Rico has extremely high fungal spore concentrations—as high as 110,000 spores per cubic meter of air, more than double the amount considered “very high,” according to the [U.S. National Allergy Bureau's scale](#). But fungi are still underestimated as triggers of asthma in Puerto Rico. Exposure is difficult to measure and evaluating the impacts of fungi on asthma requires large and expensive studies. Additionally, asthma is a complex disease and more often studies focus on genetics, viral infections, and pollution instead of fungal exposures.

A roundup of the month's essays, podcast episodes, fellows in the news, exciting updates and more. Delivered to your inbox monthly.

Bottom of Form

Plus, the more common fungal species in Puerto Rico's outdoor air are not included in commons tests for allergens. Production of high-quality fungal extracts is difficult due to challenges with manufacturing and standardization, resulting in fungi being neglected for commercial allergen extract panels.

During the allergy section of my graduate immunology course, the professor, an allergist immunologist, asked the students: “What is the most common allergen in Puerto Rico?” We were fresh out of our mycology (the study of fungi) course where the professor told us fungi were the most common allergen, so we all answered: “FUNGI!”

The immunology professor told us we were incorrect, and that it was dust mites. It was confusing having two experts tell me different answers. But since fungi are often left out of allergy assessments, things like dust mites do *seem* the biggest allergen issue. And even though [studies](#) show the allergenic potential of airborne

fungal particulates in the country, given the lack of formal allergy tests, allergist immunologists in Puerto Rico are still resistant to placing more importance on fungi.

### **Post-hurricane fungal spore spikes**



Puerto Rico National Guard members are assisting communities as Puerto Ricans try to get to their homes in the flooded area after the path of Hurricane Maria. (Credit: [Sgt. Jose Ahiram Diaz-Ramos/The National Guard](#))

I've worked on several studies evaluating airborne fungal spore concentrations post-Hurricane María in low-income communities in Puerto Rico. I collected air samples from people's homes and listened as they shared their stories and experiences during and after the hurricane. The burden in these communities was immense. Damaged homes in flood-prone areas stayed flooded months after the hurricane due to heavy rains. I remember a home where all the furniture and appliances were placed on top of blocks to save them. In several homes, high water marks on the walls showed the extent of the flooding, and visible mold growth. To this day, we still have homes with blue tarps over their roofs.

This disaster also affected people's mental health, triggering stress and anxiety at the thought of more heavy rains to come. The effect of Hurricane María on Puerto Ricans' mental health is reflected in the crowded supermarkets and gas stations, where bottled water and canned food is always sold out immediately after a tropical storm warning.

*[This essay is also available in Spanish](#)*

COVID-19 has also forced everyone to spend more time indoors, accentuating the need for improved indoor air quality. It's crucial to include fungi in those assessments. Most Puerto Rican homes have natural air ventilation, which means that fungal spores outside can easily get inside through windows and doors. Although Puerto Rico has been impacted by tropical storms and hurricanes in the past, the effects of these catastrophic events on indoor airborne fungal communities remain poorly characterized. I am working to address these gaps by examining indoor airborne fungal levels in the aftermath of water damage and flooded homes by Hurricane María in San Juan, Puerto Rico. My colleagues and I are also studying how the immune system responds to exposure to common fungal spores found in these homes. These data will help shed insight on the human health implications of flooding events in Puerto Rico and other flood-prone areas.

### **Education and collaboration**

With education, asthma patients can gain power over their disease. First, asthmatic patients must identify if fungal spores are one of their triggers. For people in San Juan, the [TOTAAL](#) (Tropical Outdoor Triggers of

Asthma and Allergies) App can help by comparing their asthma symptoms with day-to-day fungal spore levels in the city.

Outside of the capital, since fungal spore concentrations follow a seasonal pattern with maximum levels during the rainy months of September to November, fungal spore calendars can help to assess if patients are allergic. Fungal spore levels also follow a circadian rhythm, increasing at early morning hours, so its recommended to use an air purifier with high-efficiency particulate (HEPA) filters during those times to decrease exposures while you sleep. And since fungal spore levels increase following precipitation, people should avoid going out after rain.

Education and awareness begin at the community level. By organizing educational activities (such as teaching patients to recognize their symptom triggers and hands-on demonstrations of what airborne fungi are) in affected communities, and transforming data into action by developing guidelines during post-flood recovery efforts that includes fungal prevention and remediation training for community leaders, we can empower patients to take their health into their own hands.

But Puerto Rico also needs collaboration. We need help from the U.S. and local government to provide a better emergency response after natural disasters, and aid in the form of home repairs and air purifiers as part of recovery efforts.

Puerto Rico is an unincorporated U.S. territory, but our environment, conditions, needs, vulnerabilities, and circumstances are different from those of the U.S. Our increased asthma prevalence, tropical and humid environmental conditions, constant flooding, and high airborne fungal concentrations are just a few critical differences.

Four years after Hurricane María, Puerto Rico is still far from recovery. We need equal and fast federal funding approval and release to begin reconstruction efforts, especially for the power grid. We need an up-to-date Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster planning assessment for Puerto Rico. We need to be treated seriously, without discrimination and with the same respect as American citizens living in the 50 U.S. states. These actions will positively impact the response and recovery post-disaster—not only just for respiratory health but for Puerto Ricans' overall well-being.

## **Rep. Sherrill Holds Science, Space, and Technology Committee Hearing on PFAS Research and Development** December 7, 2021

Staff

Today, as Chair of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee's Environment Subcommittee, Representative Mikie Sherrill (NJ-11) held a hearing on per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) to discuss the role of federal research and development to better understand and address the growing problem and expand public understanding about PFAS in NJ-11 and across the country.

PFAS are a class of human-made chemicals. They're used in many industrial and everyday consumer products such as firefighting foam, food packaging, nonstick cookware, carpets, and even dental floss. PFAS are known as "forever chemicals" due to their widespread use, persistence in the environment, and strong molecular structure that makes them nearly impossible to break down. There is growing consensus that PFAS are linked to negative health consequences including cancer, infertility, liver and kidney disease, hormone disruption, and damage to the immune system especially in children.

[Click here](#) to watch Rep. Sherrill's opening remarks. A full transcript of her remarks is provided below:

*Good morning and welcome to today's joint hearing of the Environment and Research and Technology Subcommittees on PFAS research and development.*

*Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS are a class of human-made chemicals. They're used in many industrial and everyday consumer products such as firefighting foam, food packaging, nonstick cookware, carpets, and even dental floss.*

*PFAS are known as "forever chemicals" due to their widespread use, persistence in the environment, and strong molecular structure that makes them nearly impossible to break down. Despite being in use since the 1940's, PFAS are considered contaminants of emerging concern, as we continue to understand the negative human health and ecological impacts of these substances. There is growing consensus that PFAS are linked to negative health consequences including but not limited to, cancer, infertility, liver and kidney disease, hormone disruption, and damage to the immune system especially in children.*

*As a former Navy pilot, I have spent countless days on military bases. Unbeknownst to me and my fellow servicemembers, I was in frequent contact with PFAS. Firefighting foam used on military bases, also known as Aqueous Film Forming Foaming or "AFFF," contains PFAS. AFFF has caused PFAS contamination at levels deemed unsafe by the CDC. That is why I helped secure funding in the National Defense Authorization Act to help clean up our military installations, including the Picatinny Arsenal in north Jersey.*

*The extensive use of PFAS has led to most, if not all, Americans to have these forever chemicals in their body to some degree. This is something I'm seeing across my district, from North Haledon to Verona to Stanhope – and everywhere in between. In fact, this issue is so critical in my district, that one of my ten community project submissions was for PFAS remediation in Hopatcong.*

*While this issue is extensive in all communities across the country, it has disproportionate impacts on small communities who have trouble bearing the expense of remediation. It is concerning how little we know about these harmful chemicals and, even further, how limited our understanding is about what we still need to learn. I am proud to say that New Jersey is the first in the nation to set PFAS drinking water standards. But we have only just begun to scratch the surface. Unfortunately, actions we are taking in New Jersey to reduce our exposure to PFAS through drinking water are expensive for our municipalities. I'm proud that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is making real investments to fund lead pipe remediation and removal of PFAS contaminants from water systems, ensuring we have safe drinking water but without doing so on the backs of taxpayers in New Jersey and across the country. This is a great start.*



*But given the scale of this issue, and the cost to our communities, it's clear we need to do more to support our municipalities fighting these harmful chemicals. So, we must support R&D to make remediation easier and less expensive. If we don't, the costs to our communities' health will continue to compound, and that is unacceptable.*

*There are many outstanding questions related to PFAS fate and transport, toxicity, exposure pathways, treatment and destruction, remediation, and essential use. We know PFAS are dangerous and harmful, but we don't know exactly how many PFAS chemicals there are – but they're in the thousands. In many cases, we don't have the ability to detect PFAS that are present or measure their concentration. Questions also remain about global production volumes of PFAS, where PFAS are used, and PFAS hotspots.*

*To answer these questions, we must support an interdisciplinary, collaborative, and integrated approach. It is critical to develop partnerships between state and local entities, academia, non-governmental stakeholders, and the Federal government.*

*Due to the cross-cutting nature of PFAS, numerous Federal agencies are essential to addressing the problem. The National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), DoD, NIST, NSF, NOAA, FAA, and of course EPA—all are essential to conducting and funding research efforts for PFAS. This is an even more timely hearing for the Committee as the EPA has just released their PFAS Strategic Roadmap, a comprehensive strategy to combat the persistent challenges of PFAS.*

*I am particularly pleased to see the EPA prioritizing investments in research, development, and innovation to strengthen our understanding of PFAS and accelerate remediation efforts. Additionally, the Roadmap's emphasis on protections for disadvantaged communities that have been disproportionately impacted by PFAS is key as we strive to address environmental justice concerns.*

*There is significant ongoing PFAS research and development activities, and even more in the pipeline. That is why I am pleased to welcome our esteemed panel of PFAS experts who are well-versed on the current state of research and development. I look forward to hearing their testimony to better understand the gaps in our scientific understanding of PFAS and to also identify future research needs.*

*I am also eager to hear their recommendations for how this Committee can help facilitate research and development collaborations between Federal and non-Federal entities and identify opportunities for interagency coordination at the Federal level.*

Newsday

<https://www.newsday.com/long-island/suffolk/water-quality-grants-long-island-sound-conservation-1.50444782>

## **More than \$2.5M in grants to improve water quality in Long Island Sound**

December 8, 2021

Vera Chinese

Federal officials this week announced \$5.4 million in grants to government agencies and community groups for 39 conservation and education projects that will benefit water quality in Long Island Sound.

The grants, announced during a virtual news conference Monday, combine funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

About half the money will benefit New York-based projects while the remainder will go to organizations in Connecticut and Vermont. The Vermont projects mostly focus on preventing nitrogen pollution in the Connecticut River, which discharges in the Sound.

Together the projects are expected to treat 353,000 gallons of stormwater annually, install 43,000-square-feet of green infrastructure and remove 97,700 pounds of marine debris from the Sound, EPA officials said.

"Long Island Sound is an essential ecosystem that supports communities, economies and habitats across the region, and we are proud to support local projects that will protect the environment," Deborah Szaro, EPA New England acting regional administrator, said in a statement. "This year's recipients showcase diverse and innovative projects that help to protect and restore Long Island Sound."

One of Long Island's largest grants is \$249,046 for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County to restore degraded shoreline marshes in Centerport Harbor using ribbed mussels and cordgrass.

Two grants awarded to the Farmingdale-based nonprofit Citizens Campaign for the Environment include \$100,000 to deliver educational and stewardship activities for students and \$60,001 to install a rain garden to capture stormwater runoff in Northport Harbor.

Each grant requires matching funds from the receiving organization or a agency.

Reps. Tom Suozzi (D-Glen Cove) and Lee Zeldin (R-Shirley), New York "co-chairs for the bipartisan Long Island Sound caucus, both noted efforts to increase funding to improve the Sound.

Suozzi, speaking during the virtual news conference, said annual federal funding for the Sound has increased during his time in Congress, from about \$4 million to \$30 million. One of the largest grants awarded in his district was \$604,461 to the nonprofit Save the Sound to establish a natural shoreline to reduce erosion along Memorial Field in Little Neck Bay. Another \$100,000 awarded to the Village of Sea Cliff will fund a water-quality monitoring program in Hempstead Harbor.

Every project, Suozzi said, contributes to the overall health of the ecosystem.

"Anything that happens in Connecticut on the Long Island Sound, or anything that happens in New York City on the Long Island Sound, or anything that happens in Nassau, Suffolk, we're all affected by it," he said in a phone interview. "There are no boundaries. It's all one big ecosystem that makes up our National Park."

Zeldin noted grants in his district include \$399,997 to the University of Connecticut to develop a climate and shoreline plan for Great Gull Island east of Plum Island and \$79,640 to Brookhaven Town to plant 200,000 oysters in Port Jefferson Harbor. He stressed the work of environmentalists in getting the projects done.

"You all make it not only look easy, you actually make some of these victories to secure easy," Zeldin said.

## LI SOUND INVESTMENTS

\$81,341 to Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County to deploy floating litter traps to remove debris.

Another

\$115,841

to the cooperative extension to remove derelict oyster gear from 18 square miles between New York and Connecticut.

\$80,374

to the Nassau County Museum of Art to restore grassland at the William Cullen Bryant Preserve in Roslyn Harbor.

Source: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

NYT

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/08/business/economy/coal-miners-unions-climate.html>

## ***The Achilles' Heel of Biden's Climate Plan? Coal Miners.***

December 8, 2021

Noam Scheiber

For years, environmentalists have sought compromises with labor unions in industries reliant on fossil fuels, aware that one of the biggest obstacles to cutting carbon emissions is opposition from the unions' members. States like Washington, New York and Illinois have enacted renewable-energy laws that were backed by unions representing workers who build and maintain traditional power plants. And unions for electricians and steelworkers are rallying behind President Biden's climate and social policy legislation, now in the Senate's hands.

But at least one group of workers appears far less enthusiastic about the deal-making: coal workers, who continue to regard clean-energy jobs as a major risk to their standard of living.

"It's definitely going to pay less, not have our insurance," Gary Campbell, a heavy-equipment operator at a coal mine in West Virginia, said of wind and solar jobs. "We see windmills around us everywhere. They're up, then everybody disappears. It's not consistent."

Mr. Biden has sought to address the concerns about pay with subsidies that provide incentives for wind and solar projects to offer union-scale wages. His bill includes billions in aid, training money and redevelopment funds that will help coal communities.

But Phil Smith, the top lobbyist for the United Mine Workers of America, said a general skepticism toward promises of economic relief was nonetheless widespread among his members. "We've heard the same things over and over and over again going back to J.F.K.," Mr. Smith said. The union has been pointedly mum on the current version of Mr. Biden's bill, which the president is calling Build Back Better.

Unfortunately for Mr. Biden, this skepticism has threatened to undermine his efforts on climate change. While there are fewer than 50,000 unionized coal miners in the country, compared with the millions of industrial and construction workers who belong to unions, miners have long punched above their weight thanks to their concentration in election battleground states like Pennsylvania or states with powerful senators, like Joe Manchin III of West Virginia.

When Mr. Manchin, a Democrat and one of the chamber's swing votes, came out against Mr. Biden's \$150 billion clean electricity program in October, his move effectively killed what many environmentalists considered the most critical component of the president's climate agenda. The miners' union applauded.

And Mr. Manchin and his constituents will continue to exert outsize influence over climate policy. Mr. Biden's roughly \$2 trillion bill includes about \$550 billion in spending on green technology and infrastructure. Even if the bill passes largely intact, most experts say future government action will be necessary to stave off the catastrophic effects of global warming.

All of that has raised the stakes for courting coal miners.

"Our guiding principle is the belief that we don't have to choose between good jobs and a clean environment," said Jason Walsh, the executive director of the BlueGreen Alliance, which has united labor and environmental groups to marshal support for initiatives like Mr. Biden's. "But our ability to continue to articulate that belief with a straight face depends on the policy choices we make."

"Coal miners," he added, "are at the center of that."

It is impossible to explain mine workers' jaundiced view of Mr. Biden's agenda without appreciating their heightened economic vulnerability: Unlike the carpenters and electricians who work at power plants but could apply their skills to renewable-energy projects, many miners are unlikely to find jobs on wind and solar farms that resemble their current work. (Some, like equipment operators, have more transferable skills.)

It is also difficult to overstate the political gamesmanship that has shaped the discourse on miners. In her 2016 presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton proposed spending \$30 billion on economic aid for coal country. But a verbal miscue — “We’re going to put a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business,” she said while discussing her proposal at a town hall — allowed opponents to portray her as waging a “war on coal.”

“It is a politicized situation in which one political party that’s increasingly captured by industry benefits from the status quo by perpetuating this rhetoric,” said Matto Mildenberger, a political scientist at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who studies the politics of climate policy.

And then there is Mr. Manchin, a complicated political figure who is among the Senate’s leading recipients of campaign money from the fossil fuel industry.

Mr. Manchin has sometimes resisted provisions favored by the miners’ union, such as wage-replacement payments to coal workers who must accept a lower-paying job. “At the end of the day, it wasn’t something he was interested in doing,” said Mr. Smith, the union’s lobbyist. A spokeswoman for Mr. Manchin declined to comment.

Yet in other ways Mr. Manchin has channeled his constituents’ feelings well, suggesting that he might be more enthusiastic about renewable-energy legislation if they were.

At a forum in the spring, he talked about the tendency to forget coal miners — “We feel like the returning Vietnam veteran,” he said — and questioned the proposed trade of “the traditional jobs we’re about to lose, for the transitional jobs that I’m not sure are going to be there.”

In interviews, coal workers said they were skeptical that Mr. Biden’s spending plan would ultimately benefit them. Mr. Campbell, a recording secretary for his union local, said he would be pleased if an electric-vehicle battery plant opened in West Virginia under a manufacturing tax credit pending in Congress.



Image

“It’s definitely going to pay less, not have our insurance,” Gary Campbell, a heavy-equipment operator at the Loveridge mine, said of wind and solar work. Credit...Kristian Thacker for The New York Times

But he doubted it would happen. “Until something gets done, I don’t want to jump on anyone’s coattail,” he said. “We’ve had a lot of promises, that’s about it.”

Dustin Tingley, an expert on public opinion on climate policy at Harvard University, said that while investments in green technology were popular among the general public, many coal country residents simply didn’t believe these investments would produce jobs in their communities over the long term.

“If you’re some 35-year-old, 40-year-old worker in fossil fuels thinking about transitioning to some new industry, you need to have the expectation that the jobs will actually be around,” Dr. Tingley said.

The clean-energy bill that Illinois passed in September illustrates the tension. The legislation allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, and ensures that construction workers will receive union-scale wages on most nonresidential projects. It also includes tens of millions of dollars for worker training.

But Doris Turner, a Democratic state senator from central Illinois whose district includes a coal-powered plant and mine workers, said she had voted “present” rather than “yea” on the bill because of lingering concerns about workers.

Ms. Turner, a first-term senator who helped win a concession to extend the life of the local coal plant, said she sometimes felt like the Joe Manchin of Illinois. “I’m trying to build relationships with new colleagues, and all of a sudden here we are with this energy legislation and I’m like, ‘I can’t do that,’” Ms. Turner said. “Nobody was very rude, but I could hear sighs.”

Pat Devaney, the secretary-treasurer of the Illinois A.F.L.-C.I.O., who was involved in negotiating the bill, said coal workers presented the most vexing policy dilemma.

“That one is a little bit tougher of a nut to crack,” he said, adding that the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and other labor groups would continue to push for proposals like health benefits and lost-wage compensation for displaced workers, programs that didn’t make it into the recently enacted Illinois law.

Such delays in economic relief are typical and have heightened miners’ opposition to clean-energy legislation, said Heidi Binko, executive director of the Just Transition Fund, a nonprofit group focused on growing local economies hit hard by the decline of fossil fuels.

Ms. Binko cited the example of the Obama administration, which in 2014 proposed an ambitious regulatory effort to reduce carbon emissions that appeared likely to accelerate the closing of coal-fired plants. The administration later unveiled an economic development package for coal country — after voters there had already become alarmed.

“It would have been received so differently if first the administration had done something to help the people left behind,” Ms. Binko said.

Private philanthropists have often reinforced the problem, Ms. Binko said, by spending millions on campaigns to shut down coal plants, but little on economic development that would ease the political opposition to renewable energy in states like West Virginia.

Carrie Doyle, a senior fellow in the environment program of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, which makes grants to organizations working on climate change, said philanthropists were only beginning to address the shortfall in funding for economic development.

“It feels like it should have been put into place a while ago,” Ms. Doyle said. “Some of that funding is happening now, but it needs to scale.”

While such efforts will come too late to ease the passage of Mr. Biden’s climate legislation, they could be essential to ensuring that renewable energy remains politically viable.

Some scholars point to international trade as a cautionary tale. In the 1990s and 2000s, Congress approved multiple trade deals. Economists argued, as they do on renewable energy today, that the benefits to the country would far outweigh the costs, which would be concentrated among a small group of workers who could be compensated for their losses, or find new jobs for similar pay.

But the failure to ease the economic blow to manufacturing workers, who many economists now concede were devastated by greater trade with China, helped unravel political support for free trade. In 2016, both major presidential nominees campaigned against the 12-nation trade pact that the Obama administration had spent years negotiating.

If displaced fossil fuel workers go through a comparable experience, these scholars say, the political effects could be similar, unraveling support for climate policies.

“There are lessons to be learned from that experience,” said Dr. Tingley, speaking of the fallout from trade. Among them, he added, “was just recognizing how hard it is to pivot, given where people are in life.”

Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/us-epa-unveil-biofuel-mandate-cuts-boost-pandemic-hit-refiners-sources-say-2021-12-07/>

## **U.S. EPA proposes biofuel mandate cuts, a boost to pandemic-hit refiners**

December 7, 2021

Stephanie Kelly and Jarrett Renshaw

The Biden administration on Tuesday proposed scaling back the amount of biofuels that U.S. oil refiners were required to blend into their fuel mix since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The decision was intended to provide relief to the U.S. refining industry after the health crisis slammed domestic demand for transport fuels.

But the proposal drew criticism from both the oil industry, which claimed the measures were not enough, and the biofuels sector, which said the retroactive move to cut blending volume mandates would hurt farmers.

"This decision is an about-face by President Joe Biden who campaigned on his supposed support for renewable fuels," said Republican Senator Joni Ernst of Iowa, a major corn and ethanol producing state.

She said the announcement will "slash demand for biofuels and have devastating, long-lasting consequences for Iowa farmers and producers."

The American Petroleum Institute, which represents the U.S. oil industry, said the administration "would best serve the public interest by keeping compliance volumes feasible" and said it was studying the proposals.

In Biden's first major biofuels policy decision, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which administers the policy, proposed retroactively to set total renewable fuel volumes at 17.13 billion gallons for 2020. That was down from a previously finalized rule for the year of 20.09 billion gallons, set before the coronavirus hit.

It set volumes at 18.52 billion gallons for 2021 and 20.77 billion gallons for 2022. [nW1N2R904O]

Both the 2020 and 2021 figures mark a reduction from 2019, when the EPA had required refiners to blend 19.92 billion gallons of biofuels in the nation's fuel mix, but the 2022 proposal marks an increase.

The EPA also proposed a rejection of 65 pending applications for small refinery exemptions - waivers requested by fuel producers seeking to be excused from blending mandates for financial reasons. The action, which is not final, follows a court decision that narrowed the situations in which the agency can grant exemptions.

Former President Donald Trump's EPA had dramatically increased such waivers to refiners, angering biofuel producers.

In a concession to the biofuel industry, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in tandem with the EPA's announcement, announced \$700 million in grants to biofuel producers as COVID-19 relief and another \$100 million in support for biofuel infrastructure.

Scott Irwin, an agriculture economist, said the move to lower mandates for 2020 and 2021 would likely trigger lawsuits from angry biofuel producers.

Some biofuel producer organizations said they were pleased the EPA had proposed increased volumes for 2022.

### **WHITE HOUSE UNDER PRESSURE**

Under the U.S. Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), refiners must blend billions of gallons of biofuels - mostly corn-based ethanol - into the fuel mix, or buy credits, known as RINs, from those that do. Big Oil and Big Corn have sparred over requirements of the policy since its inception more than a decade ago.

Merchant oil refiners say the mandates are too costly, while ethanol producers and corn farmers like the mandates which helped to create a multibillion-gallon market for their products.

On the campaign trail and in office, Biden gave repeated promises to support rural, clean energy jobs and uphold the RFS.

The White House had since come under intense pressure from merchant refiners - including a plant in Biden's home state of Delaware - to take actions that lower the costs of the credits and help stave off threatened plant closures in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic that slashed gasoline demand.

Reuters, citing sources, previously reported that the Biden administration was considering big cuts to the blending requirements. [read more](#)

The price of RINs traded at 80 cents each Tuesday, the lowest in nearly a year, before recovering to 95 cents in the afternoon. RINs had set a record at \$2 in May on concerns the refining industry would fail to generate enough of the credits to meet the regulatory mandates.

Earlier this year, merchant refiners such as PBF Energy Inc ([PBF.N](#)) and CVR Energy Inc ([CVI.N](#)) began building up massive outstanding liabilities in the credits, taking bets that Biden would ultimately side with refiners and roll back RFS mandates, Reuters previously reported. [read more](#)



<https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/rochester/politics/2021/12/07/dec-commissioner--work-on-new-hoosick-falls-water-source-to-take-place--in-a-few-months->

## **DEC commissioner: Work on new Hoosick Falls water source to take place 'in a few months'**

December 7, 2021

Susan Arbetter

Last week, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) released its final plan for a permanent replacement water source for the community of Hoosick Falls.

In 2015, PFOA was discovered in the community's drinking water supply. Manufacturers Saint Gobain and Honeywell were found to be responsible.

The DEC's plan is complex, but the nut of it includes developing two new groundwater supply wells, and converting existing test wells south of Hoosick Falls into production wells.

The plan is currently being reviewed by the community, but one Hoosick Falls resident, Jennifer Plouffe, told us she was skeptical. Plouffe and others argue that the entire region is polluted with PFAS chemicals.

Additionally, she wondered aloud why the DEC didn't decide to make the Tomhannock Reservoir, the drinking water source for the city of Troy, the new drinking water source for Hoosick Falls.

DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos told *Capital Tonight* that he, too, originally thought the Tomhannock was the community's best bet.

"I will share that early on, I was also skeptical of the valley's ability to provide clean water from the aquifer, but we let science be our guide," Seggos said. "We really took years to drill into the aquifer in the entire valley to find clean water, and not just clean water, but enough water to meet the village's need."

When asked if the decision not to utilize the Tomhannock Reservoir, which is further away from Hoosick Falls, was made because of financial considerations, Seggos replied "absolutely not."

Both Saint Gobain and Honeywell will be responsible for paying for the installation of the new wells as well as for the operation and maintenance of the system.

That said, the two companies have yet to sign off on the DEC's final plan.

"We are still working that out," Seggos said. "We have the state Superfund law, which allows us to go in and spend money if the polluters refuse to. We intend to do that, but I'm confident that we can get the companies on the hook for the cost of the new wells as well as the treatment system moving forward."

If the companies refuse to participate in the remediation, under Superfund, they can be forced, by the courts, into an agreement.

While there is no timeline in which the companies must commit to the DEC's plan, Seggos said he is confident that the agency can get them to move on it soon.

"I want to be there, out in Hoosick Falls, with shovel in hand, digging that first hole in the ground, and that's my intent within the next few months," Seggos stated.

**Stephen McBay**

**Public Information Officer**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2

Public Affairs Office

290 Broadway – 26<sup>th</sup> Floor

New York, NY 10007

(212) 637-3672

[mcbay.stephen@epa.gov](mailto:mcbay.stephen@epa.gov)